1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
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641 over whom it was exercised. When the ancestors of the Bush Negroes were brought to New World slavery, what [567] measure of acquiescence they showed was due to the fact that slavery was not an unfamiliar tradition to them. They knew of the war captive, or the man convicted of a serious crime, who was a slave to one of their own kind. But the experience of the white man's slavery was a crucible in which the ownership of man by man, and the unquestioning obedience which men owed to those of higher rank, were destroyed, leaving only the ideal of the life of free men. "Free!" was the way in which one Bush Negro toasted [203] another, or a white man, when he drank with him. A "*Man Nengere*," an adult Negro was, above all, a free man, and 621 it was as a freeman that he was governed, for though villages had chiefs, and there were bassias who were subordinate to chiefs, and though above the village chiefs were clan chiefs, and over them all the Granman, yet the final word rested with the members of each subsidiary body, and not with its leader.

624 Every village had its officials, and its medium for discus-
622 sions. Every clan had its head, and its old men, who, [614] sounding out the will of the clan members, consulted with that head when questions were to be decided. For the decisions affecting the entire Saramacca River, there were [643] the Granman and his krutu, before whom questions of [692] larger policy or disputes between villages were brought.

Perhaps most impressive of all was the measure of auton-
● 632 omy which each village had. A village, or certainly a group
614 of neighboring villages belonging to the same clan, formed
609 a small kingdom. A Bush Negro of another village who came to visit, came as any stranger, paddle in hand, his top cloth covering his loin cloth. When he found himself in a strange village on a night when a dance was being given, he did not join the dancers until after much urging by a native of that village, and then he danced little, and if he were a particularly fine dancer, he took care not to flaunt his superior gifts. The exception to this, to be sure, were the sacred dances, when a stranger, whose god came

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to him when the drums called that god, could not be held accountable for what he did while his god had him in his control.

No stranger, no man who came to live in his wife's village, even though he had spent a good part of his life there, took it upon himself to offer advice to his wife's family. Again and again we would hear from men and women on the river, "In our village we do it this way," or, "We only carry the corpse on the head twice. Our spirits don't like to be troubled more often," or, "Mawu as a name for the Great God is used in our village, but not everywhere on the river."

There was the experience with several sacred images of village gods we had bought from an upper-river village. Our paddlers refused to carry them for us from the village to the boats, and it was with marked uneasiness that they permitted us to put them into the boats.

"We do not know what these gods can do. We do not know what is hateful to them. They are the gods of another people. We won't carry them."

But with the *gomi*—the child of the village of his mother's family, it was quite otherwise. He was a member of the village, he had a voice in its governing, he knew its gods. If he belonged to the family of the chief of the clan, if, let us say, his older brother were the chief, or if he was one of several nephews of a chief who had no surviving brothers, then at the death of the chief there would be a krutu, and the men of the village would decide which one of the several men who were eligible for the office was the most capable. Though rank was hereditary there was always selection among several heirs, and again the final word rested with the people of the clan. The offices of lesser chiefs—village chiefs who were subject to the clan chief, or bassias who served the chiefs—were passed on in the same manner.

While law making was in the hands of the chiefs, or captains, and the krutu over which they presided, law enforcement was the task of the bassias. It was they who saw to it that the orders of the chiefs were carried out. When